

Al-Yamama's Trade between the Hellenistic Period and Late Antiquity: Centers, Resources, and Relations

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Abstract:

Textual evidence from classical and Arabic historical sources largely corroborates recent archaeological excavations, indicating that the Al-Yamama region in central Arabia experienced a golden period during the Hellenistic and late ancient periods. Evidence suggests that this prosperity was characterized by intense human settlement, widespread Arab tribes, rich agricultural production widespread distribution of Arab tribes, rich agricultural production, and a diversity of natural and manufactured resources. The region was also characterized by advanced irrigation techniques, diverse crafts and industries, and the emergence of thriving urban centers that developed into vibrant commercial centers. A review of sources agrees that the key factors supporting this vital transformation in Al-Yamama was the engagement of its inhabitants in trade, not only as sellers of goods but also as financiers, transporters, and protectors of merchants passing through their territory.

The study examines the trade in ancient Al-Yamama by discussing three main axes to understand and interpret the factors behind its commercial prosperity and its vital impact locally within and beyond the Arabian Peninsula. These axes are: a) Trading centers and urban centers, b) Resources and goods, and c) Trade relations. The study relies on the historical method based on description and analysis, leading to the most important results, which highlight the critical economic role played by Al-Yamama between the Hellenistic and Late period. This importance is a result of its possession of the elements of commercial activity represented by local and seasonal centers and markets, abundant natural and manufactured resources, and trade networks, which highlights the role of the central region and its inhabitants from tribes such as Banu Hanifa and others in strengthening trade links and cultural ties with other regions. The study concludes with recommendations in order to preserve and sustain this ancient national heritage.

Keywords: Al-Yamama, Al-Faw, Wadi Al-Dawasir, Central Arabia, Trade.

Introduction

The Al-Yamama region is considered a vital area in the central Arabian Peninsula. Its strategic geographical location, commercial activity, and the network of land routes through it made a crucial link connecting the various regions of the Arabian Peninsula, both amongst themselves and with the major cities of ancient world. Al-Yamama served

as a crossroads for trade routes coming from South Arabia and the Hejaz, heading toward the Arabian Gulf coast and the region of Iraq, as well as routes leading north from the Gulf coast. Archaeological data and evidence confirm Al-Yamama's pivotal role in the ancient international trade system, particularly during the Hellenistic and the Pre-Islamic Periods. It formed a major transit point for

cross-border trade caravans, such as the Persian caravans heading to Yemen, the caravans of the kingdoms of Gerrha, Petra, and those of Tayma heading towards the Hajar market, in addition to the trade caravans of the princes of Hira heading towards the market of Ukaz.

The importance of this study lies in highlighting the geographical and strategic characteristics of the Al-Yamama region, which contributed to the revival of commercial and economic activity and the emergence of a network of political, social, and cultural ties with the civilizations of the ancient world, leading to an artistic and architectural fusion of Hellenistic and local Arab influences. The importance of the research is also evident in tracing the development of trading stations and markets in the central Arabian Peninsula, and demonstrating their role as platforms for the exchange of regional and international goods, such as frankincense brought from the south, dates brought from Bahrain, and leather from Taif.

Accordingly, this research seeks to achieve several objectives, most notably: highlighting the developmental role of the Al-Yamama region in stimulating ancient trade routes during the Hellenistic and pre-Islamic periods; examining the nature of trade and political relations and exchanges between Al-Yamama and the major trading centers in the Arabian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula; identifying the road network, markets, and products that secured Al-Yamama's place in the ancient global trade system; analyzing the geopolitical and economic motives behind Alexander the Great's successors' aspirations to control the region; clarifying the economic practices of Arab caravans and their role in managing Al-Yamama's markets; defining the geographical boundaries of the Al-Yamama region and its strategic extensions to the village of Al-Faw in Wadi Al-Dawasir; critically analyzing the

historical material found in the writings of European travelers and classical and Arabic sources about the region; and evaluating Al-Yamama's economic impact on stimulating trade at both the local and international levels.

In this context, the study aims to answer a fundamental research question: "What geographical and economic factors contributed to shaping commercial activity in the Al-Yamama region, and what were its most prominent manifestations and impacts on regional and international relations?" From this main problem, several specific sub-questions emerge: What were the geographical and historical designations attributed to Al-Yamama in classical and pre-Islamic sources? What were the economic and political ramifications of Al-Yamama's trade on its external relations? To what extent do archaeological finds and field discoveries attest to commercial ties between Al-Yamama's tribes and other Arab societies? How did Al-Yamama's geographic location stimulate domestic and foreign trade? What picture do classical and Arabic sources paint regarding the region's road networks and commercial stations? And finally, what was the material and symbolic significance of Al-Yamama compared to other major urban centers and hubs across the Arabian Peninsula?

1. Geography of the Al-Yamama Region

1.1 Etymology and Meaning

The name Al-Yamama historically denoted the region of Najd in central Arabia.¹ During the Hellenistic period, it was referred to as (Central Arabia) or (Jabal Najd), a designation linked to the Al-Ared mountain range located within the Al-Yamama territory.² Prior to the advent of Islam, the pre-Islamic Arabs originally knew the region as Jaww a name first bestowed upon it by the tribe of

¹ F. R. A. Al-Otaibi, "The Poetic Movement in Najran during the Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Eras" (Master's thesis, Umm Al-Qura University, 2008), 11.

² P. Cartledge et al., eds., *Hellenistic Constructs: Essays in Culture, History, and Historiography* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 2ff–6ff.

Jadis. Classical Arabic and Islamic sources record that the tribes of Tasm and Jadis settled in a locale identified as Jodicites around 125 CE, a geographical position that corresponds directly to Al-Yamama.¹ It was also occasionally referred to as Jawr.² Jaww served as the ancient regional capital of Al-Yamama, as noted by Al-Baladhuri, who stated that Jaww was the ancient name for Al-Yamama".³

Furthermore, Al-Yamama was known as Al-Qurriyya.⁴ Both Al-Tabari and Yaqt al-Hamawi note that the region was designated by the dual terms "Jaww and Al-Qurriyya".⁵ It was likewise termed Al-Ared, referring to the mountain range that traverses the region.⁶

From an etymological standpoint, the exact historical moment of the first usage of the term Al-Yamama remains somewhat obscure. However, Yaqt al-Hamawi offers insight into its linguistic derivation, noting: "The word "Al-Yamama" is derived from the root "yamamah," which means "the pole of everything." It is said, "Follow your yamamah," and this is our best effort regarding its derivation. Then I found Ibn al-Anbari saying, "Al-

Yamama is taken from 'al-yamam,' and 'al-yamam' is a bird."⁷ On the other hand, historical sources indicate that the name "Al-Yamama" is attributed to "Al-Yamama bint Sahn ibn Tasm," known as "Zarqa al-Yamama," who was proverbial for her exceptionally sharp eyesight.⁸

1.2 Geographical Location

Al-Yamama is a vast region located in the center of the Arabian Peninsula. It is part of the Najd Plateau, one of the core regions of the Arabian Peninsula that extends from the Western Plateau region in the west to the Dahmansand belt in the east. This east-west extent is approximately 400 miles. It stretches from the Great Nafud in the north down to the Empty Quarter (Rub al-Khali) in the south, thereby spanning eight degrees of latitude (specifically between 20°N and 28°N).⁹

Classical sources broadly highlighted the geography of Al-Yamama during the Hellenistic period as an integral part of the Arabian Peninsula: Arrian, referencing accounts from Alexander the Great's exploratory expeditions describing Arabia and its coastlines, noted that it was: "A vast area adorned with trees."¹⁰ Similarly, Strabo described

¹ S. S. N. Al-Washmi, *The Wilayah of Al-Yamama: A Study in Economic and Social Life until the End of the Third Century AH* (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Public Library, 1st ed., 1991), 28.

² A. M. M. Al-Kindi, *Kinda and Its Role in the Arabian Peninsula* (Jeddah: Kinda Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed., 2000), 41.

³ Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Baladhuri, *Ansab al-Ashraf*, ed. Muhammad Hamidullah, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1959), 86–88.

⁴ A. M. Ibn Khamis, *Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Dictionary of Al-Yamama*, vol. 1 (Saudi Arabia: 1st ed., 1978), 15.

⁵ Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Tabari* (Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk), ed. Muhammad Abu al-Fadl Ibrahim, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1967), 630; Shihab al-

Din Yaqt al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1977), 441.

⁶ A. Madani, *Arab History and Its Geography*, vol. 3 (Riyadh: Dar Al-Qawafel for Publishing and Distribution, 2008), 192.

⁷ Yaqt al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, vol. 5, 441.

⁸ A. M. Ibn Khamis, *Al-Majaz Between Al-Yamama and Al-Hijaz* (Riyadh: Dar Al-Yamama for Research, Translation, and Publishing, 1st ed., 1970), 11.

⁹ Al-Washmi, *Wilayat al-Yamamah*, p. 28.

¹⁰ Arrian, *Arrian and the Arabian Peninsula* (Arabia in Classical Sources, Vol. 3), ed. Abdullah bin Abdulrahman Al-Abduljabbar, trans. Al-Sayyid Jad, comm. Hamad bin Muhammad bin Saray (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation, 1st ed., 2017), p. 82.

the Arabian Peninsula stating: "The part adjacent to the river [Euphrates] in the Mesopotamian region is inhabited by tent-dwelling Arabs divided into small principalities, who herd livestock, particularly camels."

He further noted: "Beyond the territories of these groups lies a vast desert; however, the regions extending further south are held by the settled Arabs of Arabia Felix. The aforementioned desert marks the northern boundary of this region, whereas the Arabian Gulf borders it to the east, and the Arabian Sea to the west."

Arabia Felix, in this context, appears to encompass the core regions of the Arabian Peninsula, including Najd, Al-Yamama, Bahrain, and Yemen.¹

Medieval Muslim geographers interested in the routes, topographies, and landmarks of the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula also delineated the geographical location of Al-Yamama:

- Yaqut al-Hamawi stated that: "Al-Yamama is part of Najd, and its primary metropolis is the city of Hajar."²
- Al-Hamdani, describing the geography of Najd, noted: "Its boundaries are

expansive, reaching the borders of Iraq in the east, and encompassing Al-Arid"³ (By Al-Arid, he refers to Al-Yamama, Bahrain, and their adjacencies—positioned southeast of Najd)⁴.

- Ibn al-Kalbi offered a precise geographical characterization, stating: "The lands of Al-Yamama, Bahrain, and their vicinities constitute Al-Arid; within it lie both Najd and Gawr due to its proximity to the sea." Al-Muqaddasi adopted a similar spatial organization but classified Al-Yamama as "a sub-district within the province of Hajar."⁵
- Al-Qalqashandi affirmed this classification in Qala'id al-Juman: "Regarding the divisions of the Arabian Peninsula, Al-Yamama is counted as part of Al-'Arud, distinct from Najd and Al-Hijaz."⁶ This is corroborated by Abu al-Fida and Al-Samhudi, who divided the Arabian Peninsula into five distinct geographical regions: Tihamah, Al-Hijaz, Najd, Al-'Arud (Al-Yamama and Bahrain), and Yemen.⁷

¹ Strabo, *Strabo and the Arabian Peninsula* (Arabia in Classical Sources, Vol. 6), ed. Abdullah bin Abdulrahman Al-Abduljabbar, trans. Al-Sayyid Jad, comm. Musfir bin Sa'd Al-Khash'ami (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation, 1st ed., 2017), p. 108.

² Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, Vol. 5, p. 442.

³ Madani, Amin, *Al-Tarikh al-'Arabi wa Jughrafiyatuh*, p. 199.

⁴ Al-Hamdani, Al-Hasan bin Ahmad (d. 336 AH / 947 CE), *Sifat Jazirat al-'Arab*, ed. Muhammad bin 'Ali Al-Akwa' Al-Hawali (Sana'a: Maktabat al-Irshad, 1st ed., 1990), pp. 48, 58–59.

⁵ Mu'ti, 'Ali Muhammad, *Tarikh al-'Arab al-Iqtisadi Qabl al-Islam* (Beirut: Dar al-Manhal al-Lubnani, 1st ed., 2003), p. 36.

⁵ Al-Harbi, Ibrahim bin Ishaq (d. 285 AH / 898 CE), *Al-Manasik wa Amakin Turuq al-Hajj*, ed. Hamad Al-Jassir (Riyadh: Dar al-Yamamah, 1969), pp. 531–534; Al-Muqaddasi, Ahsan al-Ta'asim fi Ma'rifat al-Aqalim (Cairo: Maktabat Madbouly, 3rd ed., 1991), pp. 68–69.

⁶ Al-Qalqashandi, Ahmad bin 'Ali (d. 821 AH / 1418 CE), *Qala'id al-Juman fi al-Ta'rif bi Qaba'il 'Arab al-Zaman*, ed. Ibrahim Al-Ibyari (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 2nd ed., 1982), pp. 18–19.

⁷ Abu al-Fida, Isma'il bin Muhammad (d. 732 AH / 1331 CE), *Taqwim al-Buldan* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1st ed., 1840), pp. 78–89; Al-Samhudi, 'Ali bin 'Abdullah (d. 911 AH / 1505 CE), *Wafa' al-Wafa bi-Akhbar Dar al-Mustafa*, Vol. 4, ed. Qasim Al-Samarrai

This taxonomy suggests that the western boundaries of Al-'Arud merged with the eastern borders of Najd, extending from Iraq down to the southern tip of Yemen. Assuming Oman was distinct from Yemen, the borders of Al-'Arud overlapped with both Yemen and Najd.¹

- Al-Harbi treated Al-Yamama as an independent entity within the peninsula, writing: "The Arabian Peninsula consists of Mecca, Medina, and Al-Yamama."²
- In contrast, Al-Bakri posited that "All of Najd belongs to Al-Yamama," adding Yemen to this division and elsewhere citing a tradition from Ja'far via Al-Mughirah: "The Arabian Peninsula comprises Mecca, Medina, Al-Yamama, and Yemen."³
- Ibn Hawqal organized the Arabian Peninsula into two primary regional domains: Al-Hijaz (encompassing Holy Mecca, Medina, and Al-Yamama) and Najd (comprising the remaining territory east of Al-Yamama). He explicitly categorized Al-Yamama as part of Al-Hijaz: "The domain of the Arabs is Al-Hijaz, which includes Mecca, Medina,

and Al-Yamama along with its administrative districts... Al-Yamama is larger than both Mecca and Medina."

He added: "Al-Yamama is the heartland [of the region], and its central city is called Al-Khadramah... It abounds in palm groves and fruits far more than Medina or the rest of Al-Hijaz."⁴

- Ibn Khaldun similarly classified Al-Yamama within the territorial domain of Al-Hijaz, grouping it alongside Mecca within the second climate zone.⁵
- Furthermore, Al-Qazwini described Al-Yamama as "a region lying between Al-Hijaz and Yemen,"⁶
- Ibn al-Faqih (quoted by Al-Qaramani) referred to it as "the core and capital city of Najd is Hajr,"⁷
- Al-Mas'udi placed it "between Bahrain and Al-Hijaz."⁸

(Medina: Al-Furqan Heritage Foundation, 1st ed., 2001), pp. 1176–1177.

¹ Madani, Amin, *Al-Tarikh al-'Arabi wa Jughrafiyatu*, p. 199.

² Al-Harbi, *Al-Manasik*, pp. 531–534.

³ Al-Bakri, 'Abdullah bin 'Abdul-'Aziz (d. 487 AH / 1094 CE), *Mu'jam Ma Ist'jam min Asma' al-Bilad wa al-Mawadi'*, Vol. 1, ed. Mustafa Al-Saqqa (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji), pp. 5–6.

⁴ Ibn Hawqal, *Abul-Qasim* (d. 367 AH / 977 CE), *Surat al-Ard* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1928), pp. 19, 38–44.

⁵ Ibn Khaldun, 'Abdurrahman (d. 808 AH / 1406 CE), *Tarikh Ibn Khaldun* (Kitab al-'Ibar), Vol. 3, ed. Khalil Shehadeh and Suhayl Zakkar (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 3rd ed., 2000), p. 625; Al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-A'sha fi Sina'at al-Insha*,

Vol. 5 (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah, 1922), p. 58.

⁶ Al-Qazwini, Zakariyya bin Muhammad (d. 682 AH / 1283 CE), *Athar al-Bilad wa Akhbar al-'Ibad* (Beirut: Dar Sader), p. 131.

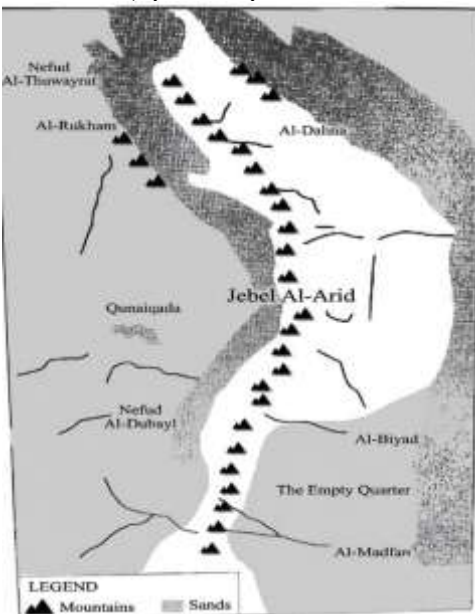
⁷ Al-Qaramani, Ahmad bin Yusuf (d. 1019 AH / 1610 CE), *Akhbar al-Duwal wa Athar al-Awwalin fi al-Tarikh*, Vol. 1, ed. Fahmi Sa'd and Ahmad Hutayt (Beirut: 'Alam al-Kutub), p. 495.

⁸ Al-Mas'udi, 'Ali bin al-Husayn (d. 346 AH / 957 CE), *Muruj al-Dhahab wa Ma'adin al-Jawhar*, Vol. 2, ed. Kamal Hassan Mar'i (Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-'Asriyyah), p. 26.



Map 1: A map illustrating the region of Al-Arud (Al-Yamama) as cited in classical Arab and Islamic sources.

Edit by the author quoted by Al-Askar, Abdullah Ibrahim, *The History of Al-Yamama in Early Islam* (Beirut: Jadawel for Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed., 2012), p. 27, Map 1.



Map 2: Geographical Boundaries and Settlements of the Al-Yamama Region.

Edit by the author quoted by Al-Askar, *The History of Al-Yamama in Early Islam*, p. 35, Map 2.

1.3 Geographical Boundaries

The geographic boundaries of Al-Yamama originate at Tuwaiq Mountain (Al-'Arid), which terminates in the south at the sands of the Empty Quarter where its ridge disappears into a sub-region known as "Al-Mandafan." Al-Hamdani indicated that: "The Al-Dubayl sand dunes lie beyond Al-'Arid (the escarpment of Al-Yamama), serving as the boundary between Al-Yamama and Najran."¹ Today, this formation corresponds to the Nafud al-Dahi dunes west of Al-Aflaj, trending slightly northward.

To the southeast, the boundary ends at the edge of Al-Falaj (Al-Aflaj); beyond the southeastern village of Qarn, no further settlements or water sources belonged to Al-Yamama. Al-Falaj lay roughly ten stages (marahil) from central Al-Yamama.² To the east, Al-Yamama bordered Al-

¹ Al-Hamdani, *Sifat Jazirat al-'Arab*, p. 306.

² Al-Washmi, *Wilayat al-Yamamah*, p. 30.

Ahsa,¹ while its northern limit reached Al-Karmah, the outermost boundary when traveling toward Basra.² To the northwest, Al-Isfahani noted that "The sands of Al-Rugham form its northwestern limit".³

Archaeological evidence indicates that Al-Yamama extended geographically into Wadi al-Aqiq (known today as Wadi ad-Dawasir) at the southern extremity of the Najd Plateau. This valley is renowned for its anthropomorphic and zoomorphic rock art, alongside ancient South Arabian and early-to-late Islamic inscriptions⁴ (Fig 1). Among its key historical sites is Qaryat al-Faw (Fig 2), situated roughly 700 km southwest of modern-day Riyadh along the trade route to Najran.

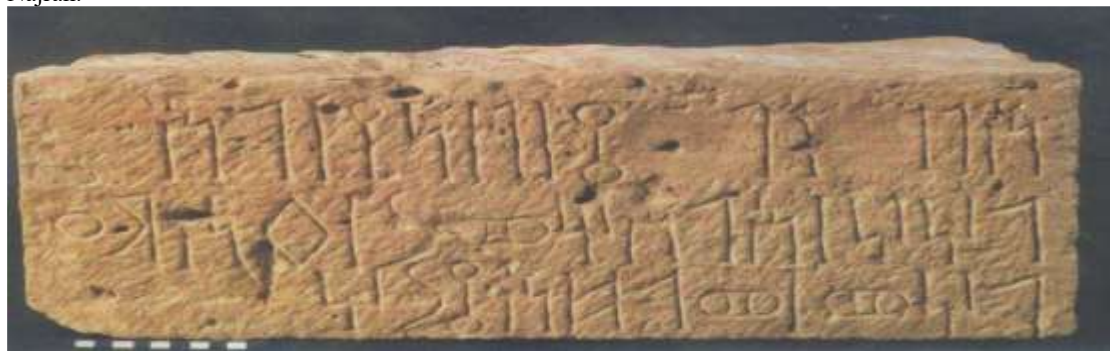


Fig. 1: A tablet inscribed in Musnad script, discovered in the excavations at Al-Faw village, Wadi Al-Dawasir. Source: Al-Ansari, Abdul Rahman T., and Tayran, Salim A., "Al-Faw Village (City of Temples)," proceedings of the symposium "the City in the Arab World in Light of Archaeological Discoveries: Origins and Development," Al-Jawf, Saudi Arabia, 3–5 Dhu al-Qa'dah 1426 AH / 5–7 December 2005 CE, pp. 97–106.

¹ Ibn Khamis, *Al-Majaz Bayn al-Yamamah wa al-Hijaz*, p. 11.

² Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, Vol. 4, p. 145.

³ Al-Isfahani, Al-Hasan bin 'Abdullah (d. 1365 AH / 1946 CE), *Bilad al-'Arab*, ed. Hamad Al-Jassir and Salih Al-'Ali (Riyadh: Dar al-Yamamah), p. 293.

⁴ Askubi, Khalid bin Muhammad et al., "Archaeological Surveys North of Wadi ad-

The village of Al-Faw served as a link between Najran and the other urban centers of Al-Yamama, the Arabian Gulf, and northern Arabia. This city was known as the village of Dhat Kahl in ancient South Arabian texts,⁵ and its inhabitants, during its period of prosperity, called it Al-Hamra' or Dhat Al-Jinan. This village was the capital of the Kindah kingdom, which had established its rule in Hadhramaut after the fall of the Himyarite Kingdom in 525 CE. From there, the Kindah kingdom expanded, extending its influence to Al-Hijaz, Najd, Iraq, the Levant, and Al-Hirah. The Kindah tribes forged strong ties and relationships with the urban centers of Al-Yamama.⁶

Dawasir (2007 Season)," *Atlat: Journal of Saudi Arabian Archaeology*, Vol. 22 (Riyadh: Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2012), p. 78.

⁵ Al-Ansari, Abdulrahman T., and Tayran, Salim A., "Qaryat al-Faw (The City of Temples)," *Proceedings of the Symposium on the City in the Arab World in Light of Archaeological Discoveries* (Al-Jawf, Saudi Arabia, 2005), pp. 97–106.

⁶ Al-Kindi, *Kindah*, p. 79.



Fig 2: The excavation site of Al-Faw Village in Wadi Al-Dawasir reveals parts of the ancient village and one of its temple.

Source: Al-Ansari., "Al-Faw Village (City of Temples)," pp. 97–106.

2. Factors Contributing to the Flourishing of Trade Across Al-Yamama in the Hellenistic and Pre-Islamic Eras

Many factors contributed to the flourishing of trade across Al-Yamama in the Hellenistic and pre-Islamic eras, and perhaps the most important of these are the following:

a) Strategic Geographical Location

Al-Yamama was distinguished by its unique geographical location, which placed it at the crossroads of numerous routes connecting the various parts of the Arabian Peninsula and beyond. Furthermore, the expansion of Al-Yamama was close to its capital, the city of Hajar, situated between the various regions and cities of the Arabian Peninsula at that time. According to Yaqut al-Hamawi and al-Hamdani, it lay approximately fifteen stages (marahil) away from Mecca, an equal distance from both Basra and Najran¹, and ten days' journey from Bahrain.²

This geographical location made Al-Yamama and its urban centers important trading hubs. The city

of Hajr occupied a central position among the settled areas on the perimeter of the Arabian Peninsula. Al-Yamama also served as a link along ancient trade routes connecting Yemen to the Gulf and Iraq.

The Sabeans turned their attention to Iraq and the ports of the Arabian Gulf, utilizing the route extending from Najran, passing through Wadi ad-Dawasir, Al-Aflaj, and Al-Yamama before reaching Iraq, which led to a flourishing of trade in the region.³

b) Diversified Economic Resources

The economic resources of Al-Yamama were diverse, most notably its numerous water sources. The abundance of wells served as a primary source of groundwater in the regions, settlements, and urban centers of Al-Yamama⁴. This was in addition to the numerous valleys and settlements in Al-Yamama, the most important of which were:

Wadi Al-Faqi, which is in the northern part of Al-Yamama, and Wadi Qarran, constitute one of the main areas of "Bani Hanifa" which is one of the

¹ Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, Vol. 5, p. 442.

² Al-Hamdani, *Sifat Jazirat al-'Arab*, pp. 312–313.

³ Al-Washmi, *Wilayat al-Yamamah*, p. 33.

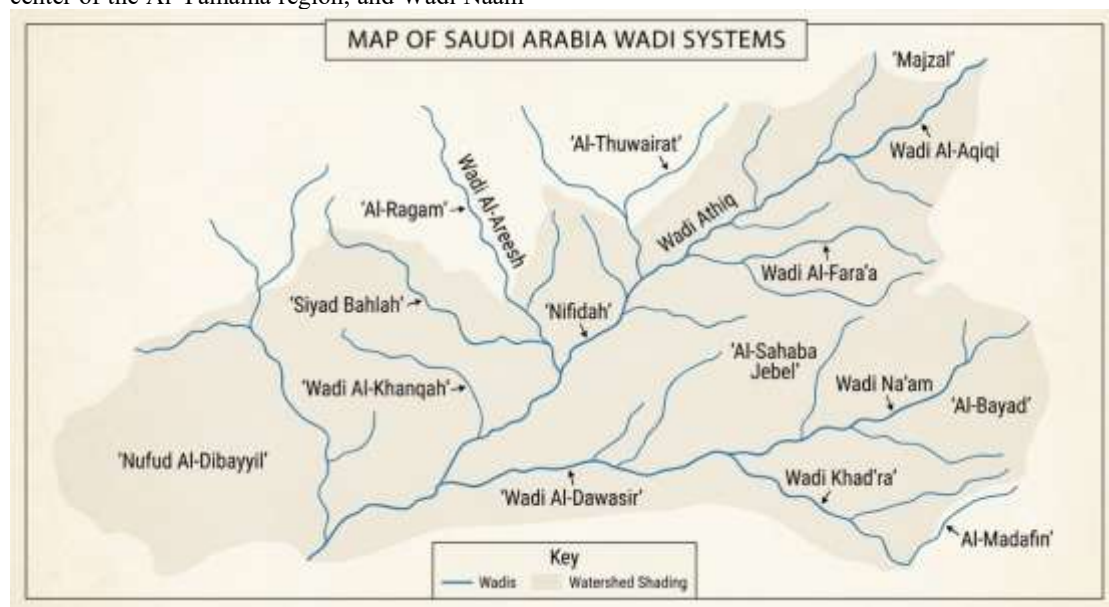
⁴ Mu'ti, *Tarikh al-'Arab al-Iqtisadi*, p. 52.

Al-Jassir, Hamad, *Madinat al-Riyadh 'Abr Atwar al-Tarikh* (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation, 1422 AH), p. 30.

Al-Hamdani, *Sifat Jazirat al-'Arab*, p. 308.

basic tribes that formed the settlements in Al-Yamama¹, where many archaeological discoveries were found in that area, including the remains of a church and some dwellings that indicate the presence of the “Bani Hanifa” tribes since the seventh century AD. It was famous in pre-Islamic times, and it was mentioned in literature as Al-Qurayyatayn². In addition to that, Wadi Mawan is located in Al-Khadram, Wadi Al-Aridh is in the center of the Al-Yamama region, and Wadi Naam

is located in the Al-Falaj region³ (Map 3). This diversity led to the settlement of tribes and the spread of agricultural oases and inhabited villages across a vast area. Some tribes from southern Arabia may have traversed the trade routes of Al-Yamama during their migration to the Fertile Crescent, leading to inter-tribal trade that contributed to the flourishing of trade in Al-Yamama.⁴



Map 3: Wadis of the Al-Yamama Region
 Edit by the author quoted by Al-Askar, History of Al-Yamama in Early Islam, p. 39, Map (3).

c) Abundance of Trade Commodities and Local Produce

The abundance of trade commodities and products in the commercial centers and markets of Al-

Yamama and its surrounding areas was one of the most important factors in the flourishing of trade. Al-Yamama was famous for producing and marketing a wide array of trade commodities that found lucrative markets in the centers of the Mediterranean basin and Egypt, especially among the Greeks and Romans, particularly incense.⁵

¹ Al-Askar, Abdullah Ibrahim, The History of Al-Yamama in Early Islam (Beirut: jadawel, 1st ed., 2012), pp. 37–38.

² Al-Hamdani, Sifat Jazirat al-'Arab, p. 308.

³ Al-Hamdani, Sifat Jazirat al-'Arab, p. 308.

⁴ Al-Washmi, Al-Yamamah Province, p. 33.

⁵ Al-Hashimi, Reda Jawad, Publications of the Center for Arabian Gulf Studies at the University of Basra,” Introduction to the

Perhaps one of the most important historical evidences mentioned by classical writers relating to incense from the third century BC until the first century AD is that during the Ptolemaic era in Egypt (321-31 BC), many celebrations of a political and religious nature were organized, such as the Demetria festival and the Ptolemaic festival, which aimed to highlight the military and economic power of the state. It was started by King Ptolemy Philadelphus in the year (279 BC) to celebrate the fourth anniversary of his father's death. Athenaeus provided a description of this celebration, in which he mentioned the huge quantities of silver and gold vessels that contained quantities of incense and myrrh¹. Pliny also mentioned that during the Roman period, the Roman Emperor Nero (37-68 AD) burned incense at the funeral of his wife.²

These commodities were complemented by South Arabian perfumes and Indian spices, which constituted essential daily requirements in domestic settings, temples, state festivals, athletic games, and formal social occasions.³

3. Sources for the Study of the Al-Yamama Region

The available sources constitute one of the principal foundations for reconstructing the history of Al-Yamama, particularly from the Hellenistic

period through the pre-Islamic era and the events that took place during that time. However, some scholars argue that these sources are insufficient for providing a comprehensive understanding of the pre-Islamic history of the Arabs in Al-Yamama, as most consist of transmitted accounts and popular narratives recorded by Muslim-era historians and traditionists⁴. Nevertheless, these sources remained the primary evidence for studying the history of Al-Yamama until the nineteenth century. During that period, Orientalist scholars sought additional evidence by directing their attention to the inscriptions and Arabic writings produced before Islam. They translated many of these texts into European languages and published them in the Musnad script as well as in Latin, Hebrew, and, in some cases, Arabic scripts.⁵ Through the analysis of these inscriptions, they extracted valuable historical information concerning the Arab past, including the history of Al-Yamama. Owing to the efforts of these Orientalists, information became available about Arab kingdoms and peoples that had existed in the Al-Yamama region but were not mentioned in either the Classical or Islamic sources. In addition, the archaeological excavations conducted in the region since 2007 have yielded important discoveries that have significantly contributed to a better understanding of the history of Al-Yamama⁶. Accordingly, the sources that have contributed to

Antiquities of the Arabian Gulf, Baghdad, 1980), p. 51.

¹ Al-Abduljabbar, Abdullah bin Abdulrahman, "the perspective of classical writers on the trade of the Arabian Peninsula," *Ad-Diriyah Journal*, Vol. 13, Nos. 51-52 (2012), p. 229.

² Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Vol. XII, 41, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963); Nigel Groom, *Frankincense and Myrrh: A Study of the Arabian Incense Trade* (London: Longman, 1981), p. 159.

³ J. B. Bury, *A History of Greece* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1945), pp. 367-378.

⁴ Jawad 'Ali, *Al-Mufasssal fi Ta'rikh al-'Arab Qabl al-Islam*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Baghdad: Baghdad University, 1413 AH / 1993 CE), 42-43.

⁵ Abdul Rahman al-Ansari, *Qaryat al-Faw: A Portrayal of Pre-Islamic Civilization in Saudi Arabia* (Riyadh: King Saud University, 1982), 97-106.

⁶ A. M. Escoubi, "Archaeological Surveys North of Wadi al-Dawasir: 1428 AH / 2007 Season,"

our knowledge of the history of Al-Yamama, its economic life, and the prosperity of its commercial activities may be classified as follows:

1. Classical Sources (Greco-Roman Writings)
2. Arab-Islamic Sources
3. Western Travelogues
4. Archaeological Sources (Material Discoveries)
5. The Hebrew Bible, Talmud, and Rabbinic Commentaries

3.1. Classical Sources (Greco-Roman Writings)

Classical sources are among the most crucial references relied upon by scholars writing the ancient history of the Arabian Peninsula in general, and the history and urban centers of the Al-Yamama region in particular. Classical sources encompass the complete corpus of writings by Greek and Roman historians, geographers, travelers, and encyclopedists from the sixth century BCE to the sixth century CE. These authors composed their works in Greek and Latin, which served as the principal languages of culture and literature throughout antiquity.¹

Pre-Islamic Greek and Latin literature contains valuable information regarding the history of Al-Yamama, its commercial hubs, trade routes, markets, and the commodities traded therein, as well as Hellenistic geopolitical ambitions to control the region. These classical authors derived their data from Greek and Roman military personnel, merchants, and shipmasters who maintained direct contact with Arab populations and the tribes of Al-Yamama.²

Among the earliest classical authors to record the history, geography, and urban centers of Al-

Yamama, as well as foreign attempts to control its trade routes, are:

- Diodorus Siculus: One of the most prominent ancient Greek historians known for his meticulous historiography. His universal history extended up to the year 58 BCE. Describing Arabia, including the Al-Yamama region, he wrote: "It is a vast land endowed with an abundance of growing fruits." He further noted: "The land in various parts is characterized by a plentiful yield of fragrant gums (frankincense) dripping from the trees." Detailing its commercial products, he added that there exists "myrrh and frankincense, which are most acceptable to the gods and exported to all parts of the inhabited world."³
- Strabo (c. 64 BCE – 19 CE): A prominent historian and renowned geographer. He authored a monumental seventeen-volume Greek work titled *Geographica*. Strabo dedicated a specific chapter in Book XVI to Arabia, describing its cities and tribes, while referencing the region of Al-Arud (comprising Al-Yamama and Bahrain) during his era and describing its commercial affairs. He incorporated firsthand observations gathered while participating in Aelius Gallus's military expedition to Yemen in 24 BCE.⁴
- Claudius Ptolemy: An Alexandrian scholar of the second century CE who authored the *Geographia*. In this work, he categorized regions by degrees of latitude

Atlal: *The Journal of Saudi Arabian Archaeology*, 78.

¹ Arrian, *Arrian and the Arabian Peninsula*, 11.

² Ali, *Al-Mufasssal*, vol. 1, 56.

³ Diodorus Siculus, *Diodorus Siculus and the Arabian Peninsula*, ed. Abdullah bin Abdulrahman al-Abduljabbar, trans. Ahmad

Ghanim, comm. Rahmah bint Awwad al-Sinani (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives, 1439 AH / 2017 CE), 61.

⁴ Strabo, *Strabo and the Arabian Peninsula*, 108; 'Ali, *Al-Mufasssal*, vol. 1, 58.

- and longitude, documenting Arab cities, tribes, and socio-economic conditions.¹
- Pliny the Elder (d. 79 CE): A Roman scholar whose full Latin name was Gaius Plinius Secundus. Originating from northern Italy, Pliny documented Arabia and its commercial exports, particularly frankincense and myrrh, which were extensively utilized in ceremonial practices during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. He observed: "After the frankincense is gathered, it is carried on camels' backs to Shabwa, where a single gate is left open for its entry." This highlights the significance of the Incense Route passing through Al-Yamama as one of the primary commercial arteries of the Arabian Peninsula.²
 - Theophrastus: The Greek philosopher and natural scientist whose writings on Arabia date back to around the fifth century BCE. Focusing on Arabian produce, he noted: "Frankincense, myrrh, cassia, and cinnamon are all found in the Arabian Peninsula." He added: "The frankincense and myrrh trees grow partly on the mountains and partly in private estates on the mountain slopes," likely referring to the Arid range of Al-Yamama or the broader Al-Arud region.³
 - An unknown Greek author wrote a book called "Periplus of the Erythraean Sea" in which he described his voyages in the Red Sea and along the southern Arabian coast. He also mentioned the trade goods transported from central and southern Arabia, such as frankincense, myrrh, textiles, fabrics, and heavy woolen cloaks⁴
 - Ammianus Marcellinus, one of the most important fourth-century CE Roman historians, described southern and central Arabia, stating that it was a region "rich in fruits, dates, livestock, and various types of perfumes." He also described the markets in those areas, saying: "Along this coast, there are numerous havens, safe harbors, and crowded commercial markets."⁵

3.2. Arab-Islamic Sources

¹Claudius Ptolemy, Claudius Ptolemy and the Arabian Peninsula (Arabia in Classical Sources 11), trans. Al-Sayyid Gad, comm. Abdullah bin Abdulrahman al-Abduljabbar (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives, 1439 AH / 2017 CE), 23–24.

² Pliny the Elder, Pliny and the Arabian Peninsula (Arabia in Classical Sources 7), ed. Abdullah bin Abdulrahman al-Abduljabbar, trans. 'Ali Abdel-Geid, comm. Ziad al-Salameen (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives, 1439 AH / 2017 CE), 155.

³ Theophrastus, Theophrastus and the Arabian Peninsula (Arabia in Classical Sources 2), ed. Abdullah bin Abdulrahman al-Abduljabbar, trans. Al-Hussein Abdullah, comm. Abdel-Moti bin Muhammad Simsim (Riyadh: King

Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives, 1439 AH / 2017 CE), 65.

⁴ Anonymous, The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea and the Arabian Peninsula (Arabia in Classical Sources 9), ed. Abdullah bin Abdulrahman al-Abduljabbar, trans. Al-Sayyid Gad, comm. Hamad bin Muhammad Saray (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives, 1439 AH / 2017 CE), 40–41.

⁵Ammianus Marcellinus, Ammianus Marcellinus and the Arabian Peninsula (Arabia in Classical Sources 13), ed. Abdullah bin Abdulrahman al-Abduljabbar, trans. Fayez Youssef, comm. Nourah bint Abdullah al-Na'im (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives, 1439 AH / 2017 CE), 67.

Arab and Islamic sources are numerous and varied, including historical chronicles, literature, geographical works and travelogues. Although several of these works do not fall strictly within the genre of historical writing, they nevertheless serve as crucial primary sources for reconstructing the history of Late Antiquity and the pre-Islamic era (Jahiliyyah) due to the wealth of information they contain.¹

Among the most significant Arab-Islamic texts referencing the geography and commercial affairs of Al-Yamama are:

- Yaqut al-Hamawi (d. 626 AH / 1229 CE): In his geographical dictionary *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, he provided a precise geographical description of Al-Yamama. He cited early geographers regarding its strategic location, which facilitated a network of trade routes and sustained bustling markets stocked with frankincense, myrrh, woolen textiles, and spices.²
- Al-Bakri (d. 487 AH / 1094 CE): In *Mu'jam Ma Ist'jam*, he outlined the geography of Al-Yamama, stating: "The Arabian Peninsula comprises Mecca, Medina, Al-Yamama, and Yemen." He also highlighted the Banu Hanifa tribe and its commercial relations with Mecca and Ta'if.³
- Al-Hamdani (d. 334 AH / 946 CE): In *Sifat Jazirat al-Arab*, he described Najd as encompassing Al-Arud (referring to Al-Yamama and Bahrain) and enumerated the tribes inhabiting the Al-Yamama region.⁴
- Al-Isfahani (d. 356 AH / 967 CE): In *Bilad al-Arab*, he defined the geographical boundaries of Al-Yamama, noting that its trade routes linked various regions across and beyond the Arabian Peninsula.⁵
- Al-Mas'udi (d. 346 AH / 956 CE): In *Muruj al-Dhahab wa-Ma'adin al-Jawhar*, he detailed the geography of Al-Yamama and its commercial ties with the tribes of Tayma and Petra.⁶
- Ibn Hawqal (d. 367 AH / 977 CE): In *Surat al-Ard*, he emphasized the economic resources of Al-Yamama, describing it as "the heart" and noting: "It possesses more palm groves and produce than Medina and the rest of the Hijaz."⁷

3.3. Western Travelogues

The writings of European travelers constitute a vital source for describing the Arabian Peninsula, the Al-Yamama region, its trade routes, and its thriving markets. Among them are:

- George Forster Sadleir: The first European to cross the Arabian Peninsula in 1819 CE as part of an official mission for the East India Company. Excerpts from his journal of the journey are recorded in the Bushire residency records. Following Johann Ludwig Burckhardt's journey to Mecca and Medina in 1815 CE, exploratory expeditions to the region increased. Sadleir visited Al-Yamama and Najd, noting the region's abundant economic resources.⁸

¹ Ali, Al-Mufasssal, vol. 1, 65–66.

² Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dar Sader), 441.

³ Al-Bakri, *Mu'jam Ma Ist'jam min Asma' al-Buldan wa-al-Mawadi'*, vol. 1, 5–9.

⁴ Al-Hamdani, *Sifat Jazirat al-Arab*, 58–59.

⁵ Al-Isfahani, *Bilad al-Arab*, 293–294.

⁶ Al-Mas'udi, *Muruj al-Dhahab wa-Ma'adin al-Jawhar*, vol. 2, 26–28.

⁷ Ibn Hawqal, *Surat al-Ard*, 38–44.

⁸ Gorrie, Gerald, *A Journey to Arabia*, translated by Adnan Hassan, reviewed by Nasser Muhammad Al-Ailawi, (Saudi Arabia, 1935), 30–36.

- Wilfred Thesiger: A British explorer and travel writer who crossed central Arabia in late 1948, reaching southern Arabia across the Empty Quarter (Rub' al-Khali). Thesiger noted the presence of regional markets and trade goods, highlighting opportunities for establishing British commercial outposts.¹

3.4. Archaeological Sources (Material Discoveries)

Archaeological sources highlight the importance of the Al-Yamama region and its urban centers, and its commercial role within and beyond the Arabian Peninsula. The archaeological discoveries that have contributed to understanding the history of Al-Yamama can be categorized as follows:

- A. Remains of dwellings and human and animal drawings: Reports from archaeological excavations in the Wadi al-Dawasir region in 1428 AH / 2007 CE indicates that the survey began from the site of King Abdul Aziz's palace, and extended to Jabal Aliq Mutairiha, and resulted in the discovery of the old roads

and paths coming out of the valley or heading towards it. Inhabitants constructed dams and dug wells along these routes to secure water supplies. the excavations revealed the rock drawings executed on the rock faces of the mountains, which indicate the existence of commercial activities in those roads.²

- B. Arabic and Islamic writings and inscriptions: The inscriptions and writings recorded on the monuments are considered the cornerstone of research into the history of the Arabs before Islam, because they are the living, speaking witness that remains from those days. The archaeological excavations in the village of "Al-Faw" uncovered numerous stone tablets and temple remains that indicate the trade relations in the Al-Yamama region and its role with other regions inside and outside the peninsula, such as Petra, Tayma, Mecca and Taif, and some of its relations with the cities of the Arabian Gulf, especially the city of Gerha³ (Fig. 3).



Fig.3: Inscribed stone slab with a Musnad inscription, discovered during excavations at Al-Faw (Wadi al-Dawasir). The text attests to

reciprocal trade relations in the region and mentions local deities

¹ Wilfred Thesiger, *Arabian Sands* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), 50–53.

² Askobi, "Archaeological Surveys North of Wadi Al-Dawasir Season 1428 AH/2007 AD," 78.

³ Al-Ansari, *Al-Faw Village (City of Temples)*, 97–106.

Source: Al-Ansari., "Al-Faw Village (City of Temples)," pp. 97–106.

- C. Metalwork and Artifacts:
Archaeological excavations at Al-Faw revealed that the region witnessed dynamic commercial and cultural interactions from the fourth century BCE to the fourth century CE. Furthermore,

Excavations led by Abdul Rahman al-Ansari yielded a collection of cast bronze statues, considered a treasure of world heritage. These artifacts possess an international character, suggesting they were introduced to the region through trade with India and Tayma, where comparable stylistic parallels have been identified (Fig. 4).¹



Fig.4: Two bronze statues discovered during excavations at Al-Faw, exhibiting stylistic characteristics distinct from local artistic traditions, indicating active commercial exchange.

Source: Al-Sinan, Maha Bint Abdullah., " Artistic Connections between the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt in the Hellenistic Era," *Journal of the General Union of Arab Archaeologists* 20, no. 1 (2019): 352, Figures 5, 6.

3.5. The Hebrew Bible, Talmud, and Rabbinic Commentaries

The Hebrew Bible represents one of the oldest non-Arabic sources for the pre-Islamic history of the Arabs, referencing Arab groups across several books dating between c. 750 BCE and the second century BCE. The Talmud, which complements biblical law, also contains references to Arabia. For the historical gap between the completion of the Hebrew Bible and the compilation of the Talmud, scholars rely on external historical accounts, most notably those of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (c. 37–100 CE). Josephus's Greek writings address Arab history and mention the

¹Al-Sinan, Maha Bint Abdullah, "Artistic Connections between the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt in the Hellenistic Era," *Journal of the*

General Union of Arab Archaeologists 20, no. 1 (2019): 339.

markets of Al-Yamama, describing them as bustling commercial centers frequented by various Arab tribes.¹

4. Trade Routes, Commercial Centers, and Markets in the Al-Yamama Region

4.1 Economic Life in Al-Yamama

Al-Yamama's strategic geographic position enabled it to play a vital role in Arabian trade beginning in the mid-fifth century BCE. Daniel T. Potts characterized the region as a primary commercial center for the production and distribution of incense, aromatics, frankincense, spices, dates, wheat, and other valuable commodities. By the final quarter of the fourth century BCE, Al-Yamama entered a new developmental phase, establishing trade relations with the majority of contemporary Arab tribes both within and beyond the Arabian Peninsula.² In addition, the Al-Yamama region possessed natural resources that contributed to its prominent role in trade, as it was distinguished by its fertile soil and renowned for cultivating grains and date palms.³ Agatharchides also noted that central Arabia maintained multiple trade routes and commercial centers connecting it with Saba and Yemen.⁴ In the seventh century CE, trade began to flourish in the Al-Yamama region. The north-south trade route (connecting Persia and Yemen) and the east-

west trade route (connecting Bahrain and Mecca) passed through Al-Yamama. Furthermore, Al-Yamama was the only place in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula that possessed abundant food, water, commercial centers, financial exchanges, and rest stops.⁵ This is confirmed by the traveler Forster Sadler in his memoir of his journey through the Arabian Peninsula during the year 1819 AD, that the central region of the Arabian Peninsula enjoys multiple water sources, valleys, and extensive cultivated lands.⁶

Historical studies indicate that merchants had to pay protection fees to the people of Al-Yamama to cross their lands. Al-Bakri notes that it was customary for Hawdhah ibn 'Ali, the ruler of Al-Yamama, to provide guards for the safety of friendly powers such as Persia⁷. Abu al-Fida' also notes that these protective services and the taxes levied to secure the tribes eventually became a primary source of revenue for Al-Yamama.⁸

4.2. Trade Routes and Commercial Centers in Al-Yamama

Epigraphic discoveries and material remains recovered from sites such as Masil al-Jumh (in Upper Najd, near Al-Quway'iyah), Al-Dawadmi, Mar'at, and Qaryat al-Faw (north of Al-Aflaj)⁹ demonstrate that the earliest trade routes used by the Arab tribes of Al-Yamama were utilized by the Sabaeans when expanding their trade networks

¹ Ali, *Al-Mufasssal*, vol. 1, 55–56.

² Daniel T. Potts, "Trans-arabian routes of the pre-islamic period". In: *L'Arabie et ses mers bordieres. I. Itinéraires et voisinages*. Seminaire de recherche 1985-1986. (Lyon : Maison de l'Orient et de la Mediterranee Jean Pouilloux, 1988), 133.

³ Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Sayf, "Emigrations of Banu Hanifa outside Al-Yamamah in the Third Century AH," *Journal of Ad-Darah* 35, no. 3 (2009): 15.

⁴ Agatharchides of Cnidus, Agatharchides of Cnidus and the Arabian Peninsula (Arabia in

Classical Sources 4), ed. Abdullah bin Abdulrahman al-Abduljabbar, trans. Al-Hussein Abdullah, comm. Abdel-Moti bin Muhammad Simsim (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives, 2017), 28.

⁵ Al-Askar, *History of Al-Yamamah*, 96–97.

⁶ George Forster Sadleir, *Diary of a Journey Across Arabia During the Year 1819*, trans. Anas al-Rifa'i (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 2013), 106–107.

⁷ Al-Bakri, *Mu'jam Ma Ist'jam*, vol. 3, 1059.

⁸ Abu al-Fida', *Taqwim al-Buldan*, 99.

⁹ Al-Washmi, *Wilayat al-Yamamah*, 34.

toward Mesopotamia and the Arabian Gulf ports. This route originated in Najran, traversed Wadi al-Dawasir and Al-Aflaj, passed through Al-Yamama, and extended toward Iraq.¹ Ibn al-Faqih noted the hazards of the Indian Ocean during rough seas, observing that travelers bound for "China, Aden, or Shalahat took the overland route westward through Al-Yamama and Oman".²

A network of overland trade routes traversed Al-Yamama, several of which connected to Arabian Gulf ports. The principal routes and their associated commercial centers include:

- The Al-Yamama–Iraq Route: Two primary routes connected Al-Yamama to Iraq: the first terminated at Basra, while the second terminated at Kufa over a distance of twenty-four travel stages (nights). Philologists designated the latter as Al-Muthaqqab. Additionally, two secondary routes linked Al-Yamama to the Iraqi pilgrimage network: the Al-Yamama–Al-Nabaj route in Al-Qassim, and the Al-Yamama–Al-Qarrayataynn route (also in Al-Qassim), the latter known as Al-Qa'qa'.³
- The Al-Yamama–Gerrha–Petra Route: Originating in Gerrha (Al-Jarhā'), this route passed through Al-Hofuf, proceeded north of Al-Yamama, and turned northwest parallel to Tuwaiq Mountain toward Buraidah, Ha'il, and Tayma, ultimately reaching Petra.⁴

- The Al-Yamama–Yemen Route: Linked Al-Yamama to Yemen via the Najran route, passing through Qaryat al-Faw and Faw al-Haddar. This represented one of the most vital arteries to Yemen. At Al-Mushash (between Hunayn and Al-'Uwarah), the routes from Al-Yamama, Iraq, and Bahrain converged toward Sanaa.⁵
- The Al-Yamama–Bahrain–Mecca Route: Originating in Bahrain, this route traversed Al-Ahsa to Al-Yamama before terminating in Mecca. Abu al-Fida indicates that travelers goes from Bahrain to al-Yamama must pass through al-Ahsa and al-Qatif, a journey feasible in the winter, when the choice of water is available for travelers and camels.⁶ During the summer, water scarcity rendered the journey arduous and a source of hardship. Al-Hamthani says: "The distance between Bahrain and Al-Yamama is a ten-day journey".⁷ The city of Al-Khadramah was an important commercial hub along this route.⁸
- The Al-Yamama–Oman Route: Connected Al-Yamama to Yabrin and Oman.
- The Al-Yamama–Hijaz Route: Comprised two main branches, one leading to Mecca and the other to Medina.⁹

¹ Jawad 'Ali, *Al-Mufasssal fi Ta'rikh al-'Arab Qabl al-Islam*, vol. 7 (Baghdad: Baghdad University, 1993), 241–242.

² Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadani, *Mukhtasar Kitab al-Buldan*, ed. Yusuf al-Hadi (Beirut: 'Alam al-Kutub, 1996), 5–9.

³ Al-Washmi, *Wilayat al-Yamamah*, 35–36.

⁴ Shawqi Sha'th, "Caravan Cities in the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant," *Arab Heritage Journal*, no. 96 (2004): 141.

⁵ Al-Washmi, *Wilayat al-Yamamah*, 36

⁶ Abu al-Fida', *Taqwim al-Buldan*, 97.

⁷ Al-Hamdani, *Sifat Jazirat al-Arab*, 36.

⁸ Noura al-Akhdari and Saida Shuwayya, "Economic Activity in Eastern Arabia Before Islam" (master's thesis, El Oued University, 2016–2017), 92.

⁹ Al-Washmi, *Wilayat al-Yamamah*, 36.

Al-Akhdari and Shuwayya, "Economic Activity," 93.

- The Al-Yamama–Levant Route: Linked Al-Yamama to Greater Syria (Al-Sham) via an established commercial station known as Al-Munkadir.¹

The multiplicity of trade routes passing through Al-Yamama underscores its role as a commercial

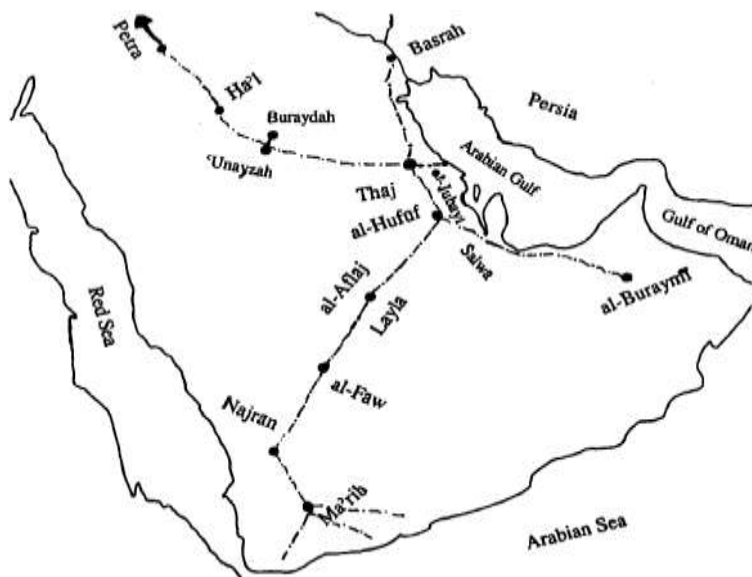
artery in the Arabian Peninsula and its surroundings. Therefore, it is likely that markets and other commercial centers were established to accommodate these commercial activities.



Map.4: Trade Routes of Al-Yamama Within and Beyond the Arabian Peninsula During the Sixth and Seventh Centuries CE.

Edit by the author quoted by : Al-Askar, History of Al-Yamama in Early Islam, p. 99, Map (7).

¹ Al-Akhdari and Shuwayya, "Economic Activity," 93.



Map.5: Trade Routes of Al-Yamama Within and Beyond the Arabian Peninsula During the Hellenistic Period.

Source: Alyami, Muhsen Hadi S. "Archaeological Evidence of Hellenistic Impact in the Arabian Peninsula." PhD, College of Arts and Law, University of Birmingham, 2022, p. 125, Map 5.2

4.3. Markets in Al-Yamama

The markets in the Arabian Peninsula were characterized by their considerable diversity and abundance. Some were limited to the villages surrounding them, such as the markets of Hajar, Hajar al-Yamama, Al-Shihr, while others, such as Ukadh, operated as Pan-Arabian fairs drawing traders from across the peninsula. Cities had both permanent and seasonal markets that sustained the regional economy.¹

The following is a presentation of the markets of the city of Al-Yamama:

1. Hajar Market: It is called Al-Yamama Market, and it is one of the most important and greatest markets in the Arabia Peninsula. drawing merchants from various regions. This market is located in the city of Hajar. Its position at the intersection of trade routes connecting Al-Yamama with Bahrain, the Hijaz, Oman, Yemen, and Iraq facilitated extensive regional trade and helped it to build relationships with these trade routes. Caravans frequented Suq Hajar to exchange regional commodities (Grains and dates) from Al-Yamamah to Al-Hijaz. In addition to commerce, the market also has literary activity.² Al-Afghani comments on this literary

¹ Sa'id al-Afghani, *Aswaq al-'Arab fi al-Jahiliyyah wa-al-Islam*, 4th ed. (Kuwait: Dar al-'Urubah, 1993), 86.

² Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Sayf, "Suq Hajar in Al-Yamamah from the Pre-Islamic Period to the

End of the Umayyad Era," *Journal of Ad-Darah* 46, no. 3 (2020): 9–12.

activity and says: "the Hajr market is the final arena for the famous poetic rivalries between two stallions of Afghan poetry of the Arabs," mirroring the literary function of the Ukaz market.¹ According to the Al-Yamamah Dictionary, the market was held on the tenth of Muharram through the end of the month, attracting caravans from Yemen, the Arabian Gulf, and Iraq, including products such as textiles and fabrics, and returning with dates and woven textiles.²

2. Al-Falaj Market: It was one of the permanent markets, housing up to four hundred. The people of Yemen frequented it. The market was very well fortified with stone walls thirty cubits thick, and it was surrounded by a moat and stones, and it had iron gates, leading chroniclers to describe it as a great complex.³
3. Al-Khadramah Market: Located in Al-Yamama, a day and night's journey from Hajr. Excavations at Al-Khadramah in present-day Al-Kharj revealed evidence of a permanent market,⁴ including extensive ceramic deposits and textile fragments.⁵
4. Other Regional Markets: Al-Yamama contained several additional permanent and local markets, including Suq al-Ha'it al-Fiqi, Suq al-Jammaz al-Fiqi, Suq Khazbah, and Suq Akmah (a large settlement in Falaj al-Yamama).⁶ Al-

Bakri mentions Suq Harbah (or Khirbah) as "one of the established markets under the jurisdiction of Al-Yamama,"⁷ which specialized in livestock products such as clarified butter (Samn) and butter stored in leather vessels.⁸ Another notable market was Suq al-'Asjadiyyah; Yaqut al-Hamawi noted that "it was a market where gold ('Asjad) was traded". This market facilitated the trade of precious metals and raw minerals.⁹ As Al-Isfahani observed, merchants frequently assembled near mining sites across Al-Yamama to conduct commercial transactions.¹⁰

4.4. Commodities and Trade Goods in the Markets of Al-Yamama

Goods and products varied within the markets of Al-Yamama from the Hellenistic period through Late Antiquity up to the pre-Islamic era. Principal trade goods included:

1. Incense: Historical sources indicate that incense was one of the most important commodities traded in the markets of Al-Yamama, driven by demand from Greco-Roman and later Byzantine markets for incense used extensively in temples, events, and celebrations. There was a route called the Incense Route that extended from Najran towards the northeast, through Al-Faw in Wadi Al-Dawasir, traversing Al-Yamama to Jarha on the Arabian Gulf, and then continuing to southern Mesopotamia.¹¹ Dio Cassius

¹ Al-Afghani, *Aswaq al-'Arab*, 361.

² Ibn Khamis, *Mu'jam al-Yamamah*, 42.

³ Al-Washmi, *Wilayat al-Yamamah*, 251.

⁴ Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, vol. 2, 376–377.

⁵ Heritage Commission, *Prominent Archaeological Sites in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (Riyadh: Heritage Commission, 2021), 82.

⁶ Al-Washmi, *Wilayat al-Yamamah*, 251.

⁷ Al-Bakri, *Mu'jam Ma Ist'jam*, vol. 1, 491.

⁸ Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, vol. 4, 121.

⁹ Al-Isfahani, *Bilad al-Arab*, 370, 380; 'Ali, *Al-Mufassal*, vol. 7, 316.

¹⁰ Ali, *Al-Mufassal*, vol. 7, 316; Al-Washmi, *Wilayat al-Yamamah*, 253.

¹¹ Qais Hatim Hani al-Janabi, "Commercial Relations Between Northern Arabia and India

indicated in his writings that the Arabian trade had many products and commodities, especially incense, and this was confirmed by Plutarch in his accounts of Arabia.¹

2. Aromatics, Dates, and Grains: Aromatics represent an important product within the markets of Al-Yamamah. They are brought from within the Arabian Peninsula or from outside, especially from India and the Levant. Jewish merchants also brought to Al-Yamamah perfumes, which are mixed with the flowers of "Korkira" and the buds of Kineria. Although Al-Yamama was an agricultural producer of grain and dates, large quantities of dates were imported from Al-Ahsa and the markets of Jarha. In addition to that, there are metal products, animals, and livestock products.²

5. The Commercial Role of Al-Yamama Within and Beyond the Arabian Peninsula

5.1. Commercial Relations

Trade played a prominent role in the society of Al-Yamama during the Hellenistic and pre-Islamic

periods, serving as a foundational pillar of its economic prosperity. Al-Yamama's geographic position at the crossroads of trade routes, its abundant water resources, and its plentiful agricultural and industrial produce, enabled it to significantly contribute to the development of trade both within and beyond the Arabian Peninsula through import and export activities. Furthermore, merchants in Al-Yamama used the region as a base for acquiring and growing their wealth by purchasing goods and products cheaply and selling them at higher prices in the markets.³ Consequently, commercial partnerships were established between Al-Yamama and numerous other countries..

There are numerous indications of Al-Yamama's economic role and commercial connections between Al-Yamama and other countries within and outside the Arabian Peninsula, including:

5.1.1. Al-Yamama's trade relationship with Al-Hijaz and Najd was close during the pre-Islamic period. They exported horses, camels, livestock, hides and ghee to Al-Yamama, and they imported fabrics and various types of manufactured goods and merchandise. These goods came from the

from the 1st to 6th Centuries CE," *Journal of the College of Basic Education, Babylon University*, no. 7 (2012): 105.

Dio Cassius, *Dio Cassius and the Arabian Peninsula* (Arabia in Classical Sources 12), trans. Majdi al-Kilani (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation, 2017), 70–74; Plutarch, *Plutarch and the Arabian Peninsula* (Arabia in Classical Sources 10), trans. Reda Abdel-Gawad (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation, 2017), 60–62.

¹ Dio Cassius, *Dio Cassius and the Arabian Peninsula* (Arabia in Classical Sources 12), trans. Majdi al-Kilani (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation, 2017), 70–74; Plutarch, *Plutarch and the Arabian Peninsula* (Arabia in Classical

Sources 10), trans. Reda Abdel-Gawad (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation, 2017), 60–62.

² Excerpts of *Minor Latin Poetic Texts on Arabia* (Arabia in Classical Sources 16), ed. Abdullah bin Abdulrahman al-Abduljabbar, trans. Al-Sayyid Jaber (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation, 2017), 38; Al-Janabi, "Commercial Relations," 104.

³ Qais Hatim Hani al-Janabi, "Commercial Relations Between Northern Arabia and India from the 1st to 6th Centuries CE," *Journal of the College of Basic Education, Babylon University*, no. 7 (2012): 104.

markets of India to the markets of Al-Hijaz and Najd..¹

5.1.2. Commercial relations with Mecca: Mecca was one of the most important commercial centers in the Arabian Peninsula. Mecca and Al-Yamama were linked by an extensive transport network. The main route connecting Mecca and Al-Yamama extended toward Al-Hirah and the Levant, fostering close commercial and cultural ties. This road also connected Mecca to Najran and Sana'a. For Mecca, Al-Yamama served as a vital link to all countries and cities outside the Arabian Peninsula, rendering the region a crucial intermediary for Meccan. Furthermore, there were reciprocal trade agreements between Al-Yamama and Mecca, co-financing joint caravans carrying frankincense and aromatics.² Archaeological discoveries in Mecca indicate that this relationship dates back to the first millennium BCE, during the Minaeans and Sabaeans Periods, as pottery and leather containers used to transport frankincense have been found. Trade flourished further in the sixth century AD. These caravans, laden with frankincense and perfumes, traveled to India, Yemen, Palestine, Egypt, and various parts of the Byzantine Empire and Greece. A parallel route across the Red Sea from East Africa – Somalia and Eritrea – passing through Al-Yamama to reach Iraq. They also

exchanged goods and products such as horses and ghee.³

5.1.3. Commercial relations with Taif and Yathrib: Al-Yamama was strong commercially linked to both Taif and Yathrib. Taif's local economy and seasonal markets relied heavily on imported goods; it imported perfumes, wheat, and metals from Al-Yamama, alongside agricultural produce and fruit from Yathrib.⁴ Conversely, commercial exchanges between Al-Yamama and Yathrib centered on re-exported commodities managed by Jewish merchants, including wine, olive oil, wheat, and cotton and silk textiles. The two regions also traded iron manufactures, such as weapons, armor, and agricultural implements.⁵

5.1.4. Commercial Relations with Yemen: Commerce between Al-Yamama and Yemen reached its zenith during the reign of the King of Al-Yamama, Hawdhah ibn 'Ali, who established major trade agreements and commodity exchanges with Yemeni centers. Strong commercial links were also maintained during the period of Sasanian influence in Yemen, creating a tripartite trade network between Yemen, Al-Yamama, and Persia. Caravan routes passing through Al-Yamama functioned as transit points where Yemeni and Iraqi goods were stored or bartered.⁶ Al-Tabari confirms that Yemeni traders sold imported commodities at Suq al-Falaj to Yamami merchants,

¹ Muhammad Shafiq Mustafa, *Fi Qalb Najd wa-al-Hijaz* (Cairo: Al-Manar Press, 1346 AH / 1927 CE), 26.

² Jawad 'Ali, *Al-Mufasssal fi Ta'rikh al-'Arab Qabl al-Islam*, vol. 7 (Baghdad: Baghdad University, 1993), 355.

³ Hassan Ma'mari, "Mecca and Its Commercial Relations with Northern and Southern Arabia During the 5th and 6th Centuries CE" (master's thesis, University of Algiers), 61; Fahad Dirhum al-Otaibi, "Pre-Islamic Mecca and Its Commercial Dominance," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, no. 37 (2022): 3.

⁴ aqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, vol. 6, 242; Bushra Ja'far Ahmad, "Sources of Economic Wealth in Pre-Islamic Ta'if," *Journal of the College of Education, Mustansiriyah University*, no. 4 (2019): 354–355.

⁵ Abdul Hakim Saleh Abdul Qadir and Shaker Mahmoud Ismail, "Economic Life in Pre-Islamic Yathrib," *Diyala Journal*, Diyala University, no. 86 (2020): 169–170; Abdel-Moti bin Muhammad Simsim, "Markets of Pre-Islamic Yathrib," *Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Benha University*, no. 28 (2012): 159–160.

⁶ Al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa-al-Muluk*, vol. 3, 288.

who subsequently re-sold them in Mesopotamian markets—most notably wheat, vegetable oils, and wine.¹

5.1.5. Commercial Relations with Al-Ahsa and Al-Qatif: Pre-Islamic trade between Al-Yamama, Al-Ahsa, and Al-Qatif flourished. Al-Ahsa produced dates in such vast quantities that surplus yields were used as animal feed and exported to Al-Yamama, giving rise to the proverb: "Like one who carries dates to Hajar." Al-Ahsa also exported fruits to Al-Yamama, particularly pomegranates, figs, citrons, and lemons.² Abu al-Fida' notes that "Al-Ahsa and Al-Qatif exported dates to Al-Kharj" (a major valley in Al-Yamama), while Al-Yamama exported wheat in return.³

5.1.6. Commercial Relations with Qaryat al-Faw and Al-'Ula: Archaeological excavations at Qaryat al-Faw in Wadi al-Dawasir revealed extensive commercial links with Al-Yamama. A 2007 epigraphic discovery featuring a bilingual Musnad and Nabataean inscription records that wheat was transported from Al-Yamama through Qaryat al-Faw to the Nabataeans. Furthermore, shrines dedicated to Kahl—the principal deity of Qaryat al-Faw—uncovered in Al-Kharj (ancient Al-Yamama) demonstrate cultural and religious exchanges accompanying commercial trade. In northwestern Arabia, archaeological finds at Al-'Ula attest to trade networks linking it with Al-Yamama via overland caravan routes.⁴ One major route originated in southern Arabia, skirted the

western edge of the Rub' al-Khali toward Al-Yamama, and proceeded northwest toward Al-'Ula, Madain Salih (Hegra), the Levant, and Egypt.⁵ Excavations conducted in 2004 at the site of Dadan in Al-'Ula yielded large quantities of metal artifacts, including statues and weapons, indicating active metal trade with Al-Yamama. Biblical references in the Book of Genesis similarly cite the trade activities of Dadanite merchants transporting goods across central and northern Arabia (Table 1).⁶

5.1.7. Commercial Relations with Bahrain: Bahrain exported dates to Al-Yamama; despite Al-Yamama's substantial domestic production, local yield was often insufficient to meet the demands of neighboring nomadic tribes. Consequently, Al-Yamama exchanged wheat for dates from Bahrain. Al-Yamama also participated in the regional textile trade, importing fabrics from Bahrain for re-export across the Arabian Peninsula.⁷

5.1.8. Commercial Relations with Iraq: Al-Yamama maintained close economic links with Mesopotamia. Yamami merchants re-sold imported Yemeni goods, alongside local wheat and dates, in Iraqi markets. In return, Al-Yamama exported weapons, plated armor, and Indian and Yemeni swords to Iraq.⁸

5.1.9. Commercial Relations with Southern Arabian Cities: Trade between Al-Yamama and southern Arabian urban centers relied on caravan networks and commodity exchanges involving

¹ Al-Askar, *History of Al-Yamamah*, 98–100.

² Nasir Khusraw, *Safarnama: Diary of a Journey Through Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, and Arabia*, trans. Yahya al-Khashshab, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Jadid, 1983), 161.

³ Abu al-Fida', *Taqwim al-Buldan*, 99.

⁴ Abdul Rahman al-Ansari, *Qaryat al-Faw: A Portrayal of Pre-Islamic Civilization in Saudi Arabia* (Riyadh: King Saud University, 1982), 97–106.

⁵ Yasmin Kamel Salim Saleh, "Cultural and Historical Development of Al-'Ula: A Study in

Historical Geography," *Kan Historical Journal* 17, no. 64 (2024): 30.

⁶ Said F. Al-Said, "Dadan (Al-'Ula)," in *Roads of Arabia: Archaeology and History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, ed. Ali I. Al-Ghabban et al. (Riyadh: Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2010), 253.

⁷ Al-Askar, *History of Al-Yamamah*, 97–98.

⁸ Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, vol. 3, 391.

incense, gums, and wheat. Herodotus noted that "southern Arabia was the primary region producing frankincense and gum."¹ Strabo and Dio Cassius further document that Al-Yamama maintained commercial ties with major southern Arabian centers such as Hadramawt, Qataban, and Dhofar, which served as primary sources of precious metals, including gold and bronze.² Caravan routes to Al-Yamama originated in southern Arabia, passing through Ma'rib (the Sabaean capital), Baraqish, and Najran. From Najran, the route branched toward Al-Yamama via Qaryat al-Faw, where recovered Nabataean ceramic sherds confirm trade interaction between Al-Yamama, Qaryat al-Faw, and southern Arabia.³

5.1.10. Commercial Relations with Gerrha: Historical sources indicate that Al-Yamama and its urban centers maintained strong commercial ties with the kingdom of Gerrha from the second century BCE onward. During the Hellenistic period, Gerrhan caravan routes connected to Al-Yamama's network to transport frankincense and myrrh from Hadramawt. The main route originated in Gerrha, passed through Al-Hofuf, and proceeded north of Al-Yamama⁴ (Map 5). As major competitors in the northeastern Arabian incense trade, the Gerrhans supplied Al-Yamama with large quantities of frankincense during the Hellenistic and Roman eras, which was subsequently re-exported to Egypt, the Levant, and the Mediterranean world for use in temple rituals. Gerrha functioned as an international trade hub

connecting the Arabian interior with Arabian Gulf ports, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, and Hadramawt. Additionally, merchants from Al-Yamama and Gerrha conducted joint transactions in Indian trade goods, while German missions have indicated the presence of a huge quantity of coins in Gerha, identical to those found in Tayma, confirming reciprocal commercial exchange.⁵

5.1.11. Trade Relations with Tayma and Petra: Tayma was an important trading center, situated midway between Babylon and Egypt. This strategic location afforded it a commercial status commensurate with its geographical position. This is confirmed in the Hebrew Bible (the Book of Job), which states that the people of Tayma engaged in trade and had their own trading caravans.⁶ Al-Yamama and Tayma maintained cooperative trade relations, exchanging goods from Syria, China, and India, including frankincense, myrrh, silk textiles, and weapons, exported these weapons to Bahrain, Yemen, and Iraq.⁷ In 2003, a German archaeological mission, led by M. Al-Hujairi, discovered a large number of weapons in the Industrial Area at Taym. These weapons are consistent with those found in Al-Kharj Governorate (ancient Al-Yamama), Syria, Egypt, Palestine, and southern Arabia. The relation between Al-Yamama and Petra dates back to the

¹ Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1959), 75.

² Strabo, *Strabo and the Arabian Peninsula*, 19; Dio Cassius, *Dio Cassius and the Arabian Peninsula*, 27.

³ Marwan Atef Al-Dala'in, "Trade Routes in the Nabataean Kingdom," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun Bil*, no. 5 (2010): 149–178.

⁴ Muhsen Hadi S. Alyami, "Archaeological Evidence of Hellenistic Impact in the Arabian

Peninsula" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2022), 123–126.

⁵ Amani bint Khalifa Al-Bahr, "The City of Gerrha: Its Historical and Cultural Significance," in *Proceedings of the 15th Meeting of the Saudi Historical Society: History of Eastern Arabia Through the Ages* (Riyadh: Saudi Historical Society, 2006), 30–31.

⁶ Al-Dala'in, "Trade Routes," 159.

⁷ Yaqt al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, vol. 3, 391.

Hellenistic period.¹The historian Josephus states: "Arca (the ancient name for Petra) had a network of trade links and relations with central and eastern Arabia."² Petra served as a major transit node where trade routes from Al-Yamama, Yemen, southern Arabia, and the Arabian Gulf³ (notably Gerrha) converged. Petra exchanged frankincense, incense, weapons, and Levantine fruits (such as grapes and figs) with Al-Yamama and Tayma in return for weapons and Indian and Chinese goods imported via southern Arabia.⁴

5.1.12. Commercial Relations with Najran: Commercial ties between Al-Yamama and Najran date to the first millennium BCE. During the sixth

and seventh field seasons at the site of Al-Ukhdu in Najran, archaeologists documented rock inscriptions depicting human and animal figures stylistically identical to those found in Wadi al-Dawasir and Al-Kharj. Najran was linked to Al-Yamama through multiple trade routes, including a primary route originating in Hadramawt, passing through Al-'Abr to Najran,⁵ and extending to Yabrin, Qaryat al-Faw, and Iraq. A secondary route ran from Sa'dah to Najran, branching toward Tathlith, Wadi al-Dawasir, Qaryat al-Faw, Tuwaiq, Layla Oasis, Al-Aflaj, Al-Kharj, Al-Yamama, and Basra. These routes facilitated trade in incense, gums, and textiles⁶ (Table 2).

Table.1: Summary of the trade relations between Al-Yamama and cities within the Arabian Peninsula.

Trade relations,	Location	Trade exchange (products and goods),	Archaeological evidence	Reference
Al-Yamama - Hijaz - Najd	Inside the Arabian Peninsula	Horses - Camels and Cattle - Leather and Ghee – Fabrics	-	Muhammad Shafiq Mustafa, <i>Fi Qalb Najd wa-al-Hijaz</i> (Cairo: Al-Manar Press, 1346 AH / 1927 CE), 26.
Al-Yamama - Mecca	Inside the Arabian Peninsula	Incense and Perfumes - Horses and Ghee	Remains of pottery and leather containers used to carry incense	Hassan Ma'mari, "Mecca and Its Commercial Relations with Northern and Southern Arabia During the 5th and 6th Centuries CE", 61

¹ Arnulf Hausleiter, "Tayma Oasis," in *Roads of Arabia: Archaeology and History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, ed. Ali I. Al-Ghabban et al. (Riyadh: Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2010), 219.

² Flavius Josephus, *Josephus and the Arabian Peninsula* (Arabia in Classical Sources 8), trans. Ibrahim Al-Sayeh, comm. Fathiyyah bint Hussein Aqab (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation, 2017), 108, 144.

³ Shawqi Sha'th, "Caravan Cities in the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant," *Arab Heritage Journal*, no. 96 (2004): 148.

⁴ Hisham Abdel-Aziz Nasher, "Trade Between the Arabian Peninsula and Syria in the First Millennium BCE" (master's thesis, University of Aden, 2003), 80–81.

⁵ Saleh Al-Mreih, "Najran and the Site of Al-Ukhdu," in *Roads of Arabia*, 357; Awad Al-Zahrani et al., "Najran Excavation Report: 6th and 7th Seasons (1429–1430 AH)," *Atlat: Journal of Saudi Arabian Archaeology*, no. 22 (2012): 6–7.

⁶ Al-Otaibi, *Poetic Movement in Najran*, 15–16.

			were found in Mecca.	
Al-Yamama-Taif - Yathrib	Inside the Arabian Peninsula	Perfumes, Wheat, and Minerals - Wine, Oil, Cotton and Silk Textiles - Weapons	-	Abdul Hakim Saleh Abdul Qadir and Shaker Mahmoud Ismail, "Economic Life in Pre-Islamic Yathrib," 169–170
Al-Yamama - Yemen	Inside the Arabian Peninsula	Wheat, Oils, and Wine	-	al-Tabari, Tarikh al-Tabari, 288.
Al Yamama - Al Ahsa - Qatif	Inside the Arabian Peninsula	Pomegranates, Figs, Citrons, and Lemons - Wheat	-	Abu al-Fida', Taqwim al-Buldan, 99
Al-Yamama-Al-Faw	Inside the Arabian Peninsula	Wheat	An inscription written in Musnad and Nabataean scripts indicates that Al-Faw transported wheat from Al-Yamama and brought it to the Nabataeans.	Al-Ansari, Al-Faw Village (City of Temples), 97–106
Al-Yamamah - Al-Ula	Inside the Arabian Peninsula	Minerals	Large quantities of minerals	Al-Said, "Dadan (Al-Ula)," 253

Table 2: Summary of the trade relations between Al-Yamama and cities outside the Arabian Peninsula.

Trade relations,	Location	Trade exchange (products and goods),	Archaeological evidence	Reference
Al-Yamama–Bahrain	outside the Arabian Peninsula	Dates – Clothing – Wheat	-	Al-Askar, History of Al-Yamamah, 97–98.
Al-Yamama–Iraq	outside the Arabian Peninsula	Wheat and Dates – Weapons – Swords and Shields	-	aqut al-Hamawi, Mu'jam al-Buldan, vol. 3, 391
Al-Yamama – Cities of Southern Arabia	outside the Arabian Peninsula	Frankincense, Gum, and Wheat – Gold and Bronze	A fragment of Nabataean pottery	Al-Dala'in, "Trade Routes," 159
Al-Yamama–Gerha	outside the Arabian Peninsula	Frankincense – Indian Goods	Quantities of coins indicate trade	Al-Bahr, "The City of Gerrha, 30–31

Al-Yamama– Tayma	outside the Arabian Peninsula	Frankincense, Myrrh, Silk Textiles, and Weapons	A vast number of weapons were found in the Tayma Oasis	Hausleiter, "Tayma Oasis," 219
Al-Yamama– Petra	outside the Arabian Peninsula	Frankincense, Myrrh, Weapons, and Fruits such as Grapes and Figs	-	Nasher, "Trade Between the Arabian Peninsula and Syria in the First Millennium BCE", 80–81.
Al-Yamama– Najran	outside the Arabian Peninsula	Frankincense, gum, and textiles	The rock carvings contain some human and animal figures.	Al-Said, "Dadan (Al-Ula)," 253

5.2. The Role of Al-Yamama in Promoting Local and International Trade

Al-Yamama contributed significantly to the expansion of local and international commerce by providing security for transit caravans and supplying food and water for long-distance journeys across and beyond the Arabian Peninsula. This was aided by its inhabitants from the Banu Hanifa tribe, one of the tribes of Bakr ibn Wa'il from Rabiah ibn Nizar ibn Maad ibn Adnan.¹ They lived in al-Yamama and settled in the city of Hajar in Wadi al-Ardh during the reign of Ubayd ibn Thalabah. Their role was to host merchants and caravans in their homes, as trade and travel within the Arabian Peninsula were difficult due to tribal wars. However, it was customary for the tribes during the sacred months (Al-Hurum) to head to Al-Yamama to purchase dates, wheat, and some other supplies.² Abu al-Fida mentions that tribesmen and trade caravans remained in Al-Yamama and stay there for a long time before their return journeys. Therefore, each of them secured a local sponsor (kafil) from the Banu Hanifa or a local resident of Al-Yamama to sponsor their safe

stay. This sponsor was responsible for any illegal acts committed by these men, whether they came from neighboring tribes or with trade caravans. Although historical sources did not fully describe the sponsorship process; perhaps visiting merchants likely provided a fee or give a gift to their local sponsor.³

Through this framework, the "Bani Hanifa" contributed tribes to the prosperity of local and international trade in Al-Yamama.⁴ Furthermore, Al-Yamama provided transport animals—primarily camels—and provisions for the commercial caravans, helped trade in Al-Yamama to flourish greatly.⁵

Conclusion

Al-Yamamah, known as "Java" during the Hellenistic Period and Late Antiquity, lies at the strategic crossroads of central Arabia. Its urban centers served as pivotal trading hubs, with extensive trade routes connecting it to major regional and distant powers, including the kingdoms of Gharha, Petra, Bahrain, the Hejaz, Iraq, and the Levant. Archaeological evidence

¹ Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Sayf, "Suq Hajr in Al-Yamamah," 11; Al-Sayf, "Emigrations of Banu Hanifa," 10.

² Al-Askar, *History of Al-Yamamah*, 98.

³ Abu al-Fida', *Taqwim al-Buldan*, 352.

⁴ Al-Askar, *History of Al-Yamamah*, 100–101.

⁵ Abu al-Fida', *Taqwim al-Buldan*, 352; Hikmat Lafta Saqar and Zainab Hatim Al-Khazraji, "Means of Commercial Transport Before Islam in Ibn Sidah's *Al-Mukhassas*," *Journal of Mustansiriya Literature*, no. 70 (2018): 1–26.

from sites such as Ma'sal al-Jumma, al-Faw Village, and Al-Khadramah, which include Musnad inscriptions, bronze statues, and distinctive pottery, confirms the existence of a robust regional exchange network driven by Al-Yamama's rich agricultural and trade products, particularly frankincense, dates, and textiles. These routes contributed to the Al-Yamama, which represents the artery of trade in the Arabian Peninsula and beyond. The inhabitants of this Yamama established many seasonal markets, such as the Hajar market, which transcended its primary function of commodity exchange to become a literary and cultural center, similar to the market of Ukaz.

Al-Yamama, known for its frankincense and woolen textiles, fostered commercial and cultural connections with cities outside the Arabian Peninsula during the Hellenistic period, particularly with the Kingdom of Gerrha, in addition to its connections with Petra, Bahrain, and Iraq, through the exchange of goods and products abroad.

The classical sources (such as Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, and Ammianus Marcellinus), classical Arabic-Islamic texts, historical travelogues, and material culture indicate these trade relations, and its flourishing commercial activity.

This study of the economic and commercial activity of Al-Yamamah yielded the following primary findings:

- The Bani Hanifah tribes significantly strengthened Al-Yamama's economic position through trade relations with Petra, Tayma, and Gerha.
- Archaeological discoveries in Wadi al-Dawasir, al-Faw, al-Khadramah, the Tayma Oasis, and Najran revealed trade connections between Al-Yamama and cities both within and outside the Arabian Peninsula.
- The commercial activity in the region led to numerous seasonal and permanent markets in its villages and towns.
- Trade in Al-Yamamah has been an important economic resource since the Hellenistic era, due to

its direct connection with agricultural economic materials.

Based on this result, the study proposes the following recommendations:

The possibility of conducting a detailed statistical study that completes the measurement of the extent of the impact of trade routes in the central region of the Arabian Peninsula and the extent of the abundance of products and cooperation with them in the flourishing of trade in the later periods of the study in the Islamic era. Furthermore, Cooperation with researchers and scholars in Al-Yamamah and its cities in various historical periods to complete the research and excavation processes in the Wadi Al-Dawasir region and Al-Faw village, the old Al-Yamamah.